

expansion known as the Mother Hale Learning Center. This center is truly a testament to the life work of Clara Hale.

DEPUTY MAYOR & CHILDREN'S CHARACTER
CLIFFORD THE BIG RED DOG JOIN IN OPEN-
ING MOTHER HALE LEARNING CENTER

NEW YORK, NY.—Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development and beloved children's character Clifford The Big Red Dog, recently joined Zachary Carter, Hale House Chairman of the Board, and Randolph McLaughlin, Executive Director of Hale House, civic leaders, parents and children to officially open the Mother Hale Learning Center (MHLC), located at 300 Manhattan Avenue in Harlem.

"The opening of the Mother Hale Learning Center is a natural expansion of the work Hale House does through its residential programs and gives us the opportunity to provide educational and affordable childcare to the community-at-large," said Mr. McLaughlin. "It also is the perfect present to honor the legacy of Mother Hale, who would have been 101 on April 1st."

Following the opening ceremony, attendees were led on a tour of the facilities and Deputy Mayor Walcott and Clifford The Big Red Dog greeted the excited children.

MHLC offers high-quality, yet affordable educational childcare for infants, toddlers and preschoolers of families in the community. Classes are led by the Center's experienced and highly trained childcare staff, who create an atmosphere that is caring, nurturing and supportive to each child's educational needs. Adhering to the standards of excellence set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the curriculum is designed to foster the growth of each child by focusing on social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

There are classrooms for each age group, each with a daily curriculum and activities specifically designed for that particular group, including: Infants (6 weeks to 1 year old) curriculum which utilizes tactile toys and stimulating activities to help infants gain awareness of their senses; Young Toddlers (1 to 2 years old) and Older Toddlers (2 to 3 years old) curriculum which focuses on building language, creativity, motor skills and social interaction to help children process the new and exciting things they discover each day; and Preschoolers (3 years old to their 5th birthday) curriculum which provides hands-on learning experiences that foster independent thinking and self-expression, and daily group activities that help enhance cognitive and social skills to prepare children for kindergarten.

As one of the few educational programs in Harlem that works with both infants and toddlers, the fully secured facility can ac-

commodate up to 38 children and is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. It also features a computer room with three child-friendly computer stations—donated by I.B.M. and United Way—a sleep room for the infants, as well as an outdoor recreation courtyard. The Center will also provide parent workshops, a resource library and referrals to other appropriate services.

HONORING DAMU SMITH

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 12, 2006

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to join my colleagues here in the Congressional Black Caucus, throughout the United States and across the globe in commemorating and honoring the extraordinary life of Damu Smith. A leader in the ongoing struggles for civil rights as well as social and environmental justice for more than 30 years, Damu is known worldwide for his lifelong commitment to advancing equality, human rights and nonviolence. Damu passed away on May 5, 2006 after a courageous battle with cancer.

Born in 1952 in St. Louis, Missouri to Sylvester and Vernice Smith, Damu was raised with his three brothers and sisters in the Carr Square Village housing project. A working-class family, they often struggled to make ends meet, sometimes receiving welfare or other government assistance. Damu has said that having this experience growing up developed in him a great sensitivity to the plight of low-income communities, and played a central role in shaping his views as an adult and as an activist.

As a high school student, Damu had the chance to attend some of the Black Solidarity Day rallies in Cairo, Illinois, where he listened to speeches by Amiri Baraka, Nina Simone and Jesse Jackson, and toured black neighborhoods where white supremacists had sprayed houses with gunfire, a sight that changed his life. As a freshman at St. John's University in Minnesota, and president of the Organization of Afro-American Students, Damu led a protest and takeover of the school's administrative offices to demand a Black studies program. It was during that time that he changed his name to Damu Amiri Imara Smith, the first three words meaning "blood," "leadership," and "strength" in Swahili, respectively. In 1973, he moved to Wash-

ington D.C., where he began the next chapter in his lifelong mission of advocating for social justice in the United States and abroad.

Over the next thirty years, Damu's activism included vigilance in the fight against Apartheid in South Africa as Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa and co-founder of Artists for a Free South Africa. Additionally, Damu focused his energy and attention on broad-based efforts to expose gun violence and police brutality, and was also active in peace and nuclear weapons freeze campaigns, working as the Associate Director of the Washington Office of the American Friends Service Committee.

Furthermore, Damu was known for his pioneering leadership in the environmental justice movement, working as the first environmental justice coordinator for the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice. After touring cities severely impacted by chemical pollution and seeing the devastating impacts of these practices on low income and African American communities, he organized Toxic Tours in the South for Greenpeace. In 1999, he coordinated the largest environmental justice conference ever held, an event which led to the formation of the National Black Environmental Justice Network, which was the first ever network of Black environmental justice activists, and of which he served as the Executive Director.

Throughout his historic and far-reaching career of activism and advocacy, Damu was widely respected and viewed as a leading voice for social justice and progressive change in the United States and abroad. Revered by his colleagues and all who knew him as not just a leader but a true visionary in the fight for justice, peace and equality, Damu's contributions to the effort to affect genuinely democratic reforms in the United States and around the world are truly immeasurable.

My life was personally touched by Damu. I met him many years ago and his intellect, heart and soul brought joy and clarity to my life. Like all who knew and loved him, I will deeply miss his presence on this earth.

Though his death is a great loss to our country and to our entire global family, the legacy of his work will continue to improve countless lives for generations to come. My thoughts and prayers are with Damu's family, as well as the numerous friends, colleagues and other individuals that he inspired during his lifetime as we mourn the loss of this exemplary leader.